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ABSTRACT

Women could serve very effectively as line administrators in education if obstacles to their advancement were removed. Researchers in Washington State sent questionnaires to women interested in and qualified for administrative positions, to other women educators, and to public school administrators. Responses showed that while over 65 percent of the qualified and interested women had long-term goals in administration and 80 percent held advanced degrees, less than 20 percent of the other women educators had such goals. The most important administrative qualifications identified by respondents involved human relations, a skill area in which women are traditionally and by experience strong, while the least important qualifications involved technical skills. Factors most frequently used to identify women for professional advancement were recommendation by others, leadership in their departments and districts, performance as teachers, and educational history and status. The researchers recommend that women seek to meet qualifications, broaden their experiences, pursue advanced education, and make their aspirations known; that school boards and leading educators identify and encourage women with leadership potential; that districts adopt assertive recruitment and hiring policies; and that schools of education train women for leadership careers. (Author/PGD)

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WOMEN EDUCATORS IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON: STATUS, QUALIFICATIONS AND ASPIRATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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Because sex equality in educational leadership does not exist in the public schools, an enormous pool of administrative talent lies dormant. Women, with an ancient heritage of empathy and nurturance yet well trained in the techniques of management, provide a valuable resource for educational leadership. From an awareness of the leadership potential of women educators and of the paucity of women in educational leadership roles, this study emerged.

A review of the literature and research on administrative women in education was undertaken. It was found that women make up the largest portion of the teaching force. Yet they are represented in disportionately small numbers in public school administrative positions. For at least the last fifty years the proportion of school administrators who are women has declined. In 1910 half of all supervising officers in the United States were women. By 1971 women constituted less than sixteen percent of all assistant principals, principals and administrative assistants. In 1979 women represented less than five percent of all line administrators in public schools. Fewer than one percent of school district Superintendents in the United States in 1980 were women.

In the public schools in the state of Washington, fifty-four percent of all certificated personnel employed in 1979-80 were women, yet women represented only 12.23 percent of all line administrators with direct responsibility for the performance of other professional staff. The largest percent serving as line administrators were elementary principals and assistant secondary principals. Even though many women nationally and in Washington have the experience and the credentials for promotion, they tend to remain in entry positions.

Studies have identified a number of factors which have contributed to the paucity of women in educational leadership roles. The most significant factor appears to be that women educators have not seen themselves as leaders. Fewer women than men have been exposed to the concept of career planning. Women teachers do not aspire to administrative positions to the same extent as men and do not academically prepare themselves for administrative positions in numbers in the same proportion as male teachers prepare themselves. A self-fulfilling prophecy develops. As few careers are open to women, few women seek or prepare for them. A belief that women do not want administrative careers then becomes reality. Women perpetuate the prophecy because they see few role models of women who have successfully achieved or managed an administrative career.

Only a few organizations have been established to encourage women to seek the training and experience necessary to qualify as educational administrators. Some are: National Association for Women Deans, Administrators and Counselors; National Council of Administrative Women in Education; Delta Kappa Gamma Society International and National Association of Secondary School Principals. Networks can provide information about administrative openings and can generally provide support.

The purpose of the Washington study was fourfold: (1) to determine the professional positions in which women educators in the public school districts were serving, (2) to determine the aspirations of women educators toward administrative positions and the reasons for those aspirations, (3) to determine the opinions of women educators and

school administrators regarding the process by which women with administrative potential are identified, and (4) to determine the opinions of women educators and school administrators regarding training to help female candidates gain essential skills and develop strategies to attain positions of educational leadership.

Two questionnaires were developed to gather data in the Washington study, one for women educators and one for school administrators. The Questionnaire for Women Educators was mailed to four hundred women educators identified as interested in and qualified for administrative positions by the Office of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and to four hundred additional women educators at large identified by the Washington Education Association. Eighty-six percent of the women educators responded. The Questionnaire for School Administrators was mailed to one hundred fifty school administrators identified cooperatively by the Association of Washington School Principals and the Washington Association of School Administrators. Eighty-three percent of the public school administrators responded. A computer analysis of the data collected from the three groups was completed. Descriptive statistics were employed. The data were studied and interpreted for their meaning and implications.

The specific findings of the study in Washington revealed that only 18.58 percent of the women educators at large had established long-range goals toward administrative line positions. Of the women identified as interested in and qualified for administrative positions, 67.45 percent had established long-range goals toward administrative line positions. The average aspiring woman administrator held a

principal's credential and an advance degree, 80.94 percent with a master's degree, 9.09 percent with a doctor's degree.

The three most important administrative qualifications identified in the study were: the ability to create a positive environment for staff, the ability to assist teachers in improving instruction, and the willingness to confront and resolve difficult situations. The least important qualifications for administrative personnel were: the ability to develop a master schedule, the ability to schedule students and handling of building maintenance. It is obvious that those qualifications deemed most important involve human relation skills, while those qualifications deemed least important involve technical skills.

The women educators evaluated women's greatest strength in those same areas ranked by all respondents as the most important qualifications: the ability to create a positive environment for staff, the ability to assist teachers in improving instruction, and the willingness to confront and resolve difficult situations. The administrators in the study assigned the same evaluation of strength to women as the women themselves with the following exceptions: women believed themselves stronger in handling student discipline and in the ability to resolve conflicts.

Other qualifications ranked in order of descending importance in the study were: the ability to organize and follow through on tasks, communication skills, willingness to take independent action when necessary, ability to effect change, ability to represent the needs of the staff, ability to utilize specialized personnel, knowledge of curriculum,

tolerance and encouragement of various viewpoints, skill in staff defelopment, knowledge of school law, budget planning and preparation, and contribution at the district level.

Without a doubt, marriage and children have differential effects on the careers of men and women in education and in society. Raising a family affects women's careers in more direct ways. Women more often interrupt their educational careers to be at home with young children. Women do not advance in their careers by moving their families from one school district to another. Women who do become administrators typically enter administrative positions at a later age and generally have had more experience as classroom teachers than their male counterparts. This tends to support the fact that women principals have a better understanding of the teacher's role than do men. They may be more sympathetic to the problems and situations that face teachers.

In the Washington study the aspirations of women educators were more affected by (1) responsibility and challenge, (2) concern for making changes in school structure, (3) professional advancement, and (4) personal and family expectations than by (1) salary and security, (2) staff expectations or (3) sex discrimination. Models and mentors, advanced study and family had the greatest influence on their professional direction. Professional associations had the least influence.

Again, in the Washington study a commitment to a professional career and the value of "doing one's own thing" had a great influence on the decision of women to enter administration. Conflict between home and career responsibilities was only a moderate problem to the women educators. Independent and family income and voluntary limitation of family size was

of only moderate influence. Availability of child care and home-cleaning services did not appear as having a significant effect on career decisions.

The factors most frequently used to identify women for professional advancement were: recommendation by others, department and district leadership, teacher performance, degrees earned and advanced and professional study. Training in educational leadership was shown to be readily available through university programs. Internship experiences were available in conjunction with that training.

Early in the feminist movement women were bombarded by books, pamphlets and angry speakers telling them to get hostile, to get concerned and to get a lawyer! These early proponents of equality for women served a need. Since 1975, however, there have been fewer accusations of discrimination. The movement for equality need not be a battleground. Rather, it should be a training ground which fosters mutual growth..... the growth of women in asserting their personhood and the growth of men in respecting women as equals. Men and women may be professional adversaries at times, but they need not be enemies.

Those women administrators who have developed positive attitudes toward their own abilities and reconciled the conflicts between personal professional roles are the ones who are succeeding in educational administration. If the educational leader is a woman who has overcome timidity and yet has preserved her ancient heritage of empathy and nurturance, she can become the best in her chosen profession. She can be an educator in the finest sense of that term; disciplined yet creative, logical yet empathetic, directive yet supportive. Women are taught to be good listeners. Women provide husbands and children wtih wailing walls and

sounding boards. Women have been dispensing band-aids for years for everything from sore fingers to hurt feelings. Finding silver linings and blue skies behind dark clouds is child's play for women. Women can make a difference in administration.

The recommendations based upon the findings and conclusions of the Washington study are: (1) that women educators aspiring toward administration seek to understand and cultivate the qualifications for successful administrative positions, seek broad experiences through voluntary work, pursue advanced professional study leading to at least a master's degree and finally, make their aspirations known, (2) that school boards, district administrators and professional educational associations identify women educators with a potential for leadership and encourage and assist them in preparing for a career in educational administration, (3) that school districts assertively recruit, hire and provide more visible leadership training opportunities for qualified women to enter top-level as well as mid-level administrative positions, (4) that all educators in leadership roles, and especially women administrators, provide mentorship and encouragement to convince qualified women that they can go beyond traditional stereotyped roles and (5) that schools of education encourage competent women students to pursue careers in educational leadership and to complete preparatory work early in their professional lives.

Education needs the resources of the total population, male and female. The responsibility exists for both men and women as candidates or as educational leaders to make sure that the potential of women

is used at all levels of the educational system. When the talents of women are fully utilized, a new, dynamic and creative force will have been tapped and the human resources available to fill administrative positions will have been greatly multiplied.

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